

NICK CARTER WEEKLY

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TRACKED TO UNION STATION OR THE CELEBRATED ST. LOUIS MYSTERY



BY THE AUTHOR
OF NICK CARTER

BEFORE THE NEGRO COULD TAKE A STEP IN ANY DIRECTION, THE BIG BRUTE HAD HIM BY THE THROAT.

NICK CARTER WEEKLY.

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The Celebrated St. Louis Mystery.

By the Author of "NICK CARTER."

CHAPTER I.

NICK CARTER PLAYS A GAME OF POKER.

Nick Carter was one of the passengers on board an ocean steamer bound from New York to Havana late in November. It was the last night of the voyage.

Some time during the next afternoon the passengers would be landed at Cuba's capital.

Nick Carter seldom made a journey which was not necessary to his particular line of business.

He was now on his way to Havana with a double purpose.

One week before there had been placed in his hands a very important case.

A young Cuban named Juan Gordo, visited Nick at his house and in substance said:

"My home is in Havana, to which place I am summoned immediately by a message announcing the dangerous illness of my mother.

"Before I go I should like to turn over to you the work which brought me to New York, namely, to discover the hiding-place of two men, father and son, who are fugitives from justice, having robbed me and my mother of everything we possessed.

"Their names are Wilbur Highland, the father, and Royal Highland, his son.

"They are lawyers. The elder Highland went from New York to Cuba when a young man, made Havana his home, and married. His son was born there, grew up in his father's office, and two years ago was taken into partnership.

"They were my father's lawyers. He trusted them implicitly, and when the latter died, six months ago, Wilbur Highland was left trustee under my father's will.

"Thereby he got into his possession over two million dollars' worth of United States Government bonds and railroad securities which comprised my father's fortune, left

jointly in trust for my mother and me as long as mother lived, and at her death to go to me absolutely.

"Two weeks ago all these bonds and securities disappeared.

"At least, when called upon to produce them, Highland could not do it, nor could he give any satisfactory explanation of their disappearance.

"His son a few days before had sailed for New York, and suspicion pointed strongly to embezzlement.

"An arrest was agreed upon by my mother and myself.

"The news must have reached Highland, for on the same night that the warrant was sworn out he disappeared.

"Though no steamship sailed from Havana on which he could have left the island, we have every reason to believe he got off on a lumber craft and made his way to this city, where he joined his son, and that the two are in hiding here.

"I've not been able to locate them, but hope you, Mr. Carter, will have better success.

"Their arrest and conviction means the saving of myself and mother from ruin.

"I fear the suspense and excitement is killing my mother."

After Nick had got a minute description of his men, as well as taken possession of photographs of each, he asked:

"Has Highland no family except this son."

"Oh, yes. He left a wife and three younger children—all girls—in Havana.

"We have a constant watch set upon them, and if they attempt to join the fugitives, they will be followed."

Juan Gordo took the steamer which sailed for Havana that same day, and a systematic search of the city was made for the Highlands by Nick's assistant, Chick, while Nick

himself was looking for bigger game in the person of one Fernando Yagamez, the noted criminal who had escaped from him two months before.

Lately he had secured some clues which encouraged him with the belief that he was about to get on the trail of the great criminal again. And he promised himself that this time there would be no misfire.

So, while he and Patsy devoted their attention to Yagamez, Chick was handling the Gordo-Highland bond robbery.

Two days after Juan Gordo's call, Nick received the following dispatch from Patsy, dated Key West, Florida:

"Your man was here three weeks ago and went to Havana. I wait instructions.

"PATSY."

Nick telegraphed "Come home," and that same evening found him aboard the vessel sailing out of the harbor bound for Havana.

What was Nick's surprise to find on board as fellow passengers, the two Highlands, father and son, before the ship had passed Sandy Hook.

Neither of the two was disguised, and their identity was easily discovered by Nick.

He was satisfied that neither suspected his presence, or, rather, his professional character.

Thus he had a good chance to study both the father and the son, and he did not let a moment go by during the voyage when opportunity brought them in sight, to apply his wonderful powers of character reading.

His original intention was to pounce upon them as soon as they landed at Havana, turn them over to the proper authorities, and make his investigations as to the whereabouts of the securities afterward.

Their unaccountable return to Cuba made his work all the easier, as it saved the delay of requisition and all legal technicalities.

But the more he saw of the Highlands the more his plans were changed.

On this last night out the steamer was gliding over a smooth sea, the weather was balmy, the sky cloudless, but a moonless night surrounded the steamer with a pall of darkness.

Still the delightful weather drew most of the passengers up above. The saloon was almost deserted.

Highland, the elder, had secured a quiet out-of-the-way seat well forward, and had wrapped himself into one of the gloomy moods which characterized all his movements on board the vessel.

Nick left him there, and descended to the saloon, where Royal Highland went after leaving his father in the sequestered nook on deck.

A big game of poker was in progress down below. Five wealthy Cubans, who had spent much of their time on the voyage at that game, were meeting for the last struggle with pairs, threes of a kind, fulls and flushes. They had plenty of money, and played for big stakes.

Royal Highland, when he left the deck, went straight to the table where the five young men sat at play. He watched them long enough to see that the betting was heavy and that thousands of dollars were in sight.

He produced a roll of money from an inside pocket and said, with as steady a voice as possible:

"Gentlemen, I have ten thousand dollars here, and if I am not intruding on your privacy, I should like to join you in your game."

The players glanced at one another inquiringly, and then one of them replied, as if speaking for all:

"I'm sure we shall be happy to number you in our company."

They made room for him, and in a very few minutes Royal Highland was tempting fate.

Nick became intensely interested in the game, and especially in the fortunes of young Highland.

In less than an hour the ten thousand dollars were gone. Highland with difficulty arose from the table. His face was like that of a dead man's, and his hands were unsteady.

The young man left the cabin and went on deck again.

Nick was not far behind.

The great detective noticed that the son made straight for the spot where his father was sitting wrapped in his fit of gloomy thought.

Royal hesitated a moment as he stood at his father's back. Then one hand went up. It held a pistol, whose muzzle almost touched the back of the old man's head.

In another instant the ship would have been aroused by the news of a parricidal crime, had not Nick Carter's strong arms been thrown around the desperate young man just in time.

He wrenched the pistol from Royal's hand and tossed it over into the sea.

Then, with a rapidity and skill for which he was famous, he made a search of the young man's clothes, and convinced himself that there was no other weapon concealed on his person.

At the same time he whispered in the desperate fellow's ear:

"Make no noise and don't give up so soon. Give me an hour, and I'll win all your money back for you."

The elder Highland was not aroused by the little tragic scene which had taken place in almost complete silence at his back, and Nick succeeded in leading Royal away before their presence was disclosed to the old lawyer.

Once at a safe distance, Nick said:

"You must be a lunatic to attempt that awful crime."

Royal groaned, and then almost sobbed:

"God forgive me! But you don't know what a blessing it would have been had you let me kill my father and then kill myself."

"All on account of the loss of your ten thousand dollars?"

"Oh, that was only the finishing stroke to the fate that is pursuing us. I can't tell you our troubles, or you would pity us both."

"I don't want to hear about your troubles just now—but I want you to give me your word of honor that you will not do harm to yourself and your father during the next two hours."

"I promise. You have me powerless to do otherwise."

"Good! Now join your father and keep up your courage till I see you again. Maybe there is a silver lining to your cloud, after all."

Before young Highland could ask for an explanation of these words, Nick was gone.

He went straight to the table where the poker players were still intent on their game.

His request to be allowed to join the company was as politely granted as had been that made by Highland.

In less than the two hours which he had allowed himself for the task Nick had the ten thousand dollars lost by Highland all won back.

Then he asked the privilege of withdrawing from the game, and it was cheerfully given.

Rejoining the two Highlands on deck, Nick led the son to one side, and slipping a roll of bills into the latter's hands, he said:

"There are your ten thousand dollars. Put them into your pocket and say nothing."

"How can I thank you for saving me from this much of my madness?" said Highland, pressing Nick's hand, which he had seized.

"By bringing your father to my stateroom right now for a friendly chat among ourselves."

"For what? A chat? About what?"

"About those missing securities."

"Who are you?" gasped Highland.

"The best friend an innocent man ever had."

"I don't understand you. But it can't be worse for us than it is at present. My father and I will come at once to your stateroom."

Five minutes later the fugitives were sitting face to face with the great detective, who had the key of the stateroom door in his pocket, guarding against any interruption of an interview which promised to be very interesting.

CHAPTER II.

THE MYSTERY OF THE MISSING BONDS.

The elder Highland gave Nick a scrutinizing look as he took the chair which the detective had indicated.

It was evident by the expression on the old man's face that his son had made no explanation, and that the situation puzzled him.

It was also evident from his first words that Wilbur Highland did not intend to remain long in doubt about the nature of the summons to that room.

"My son informs me that you have important matters to discuss with me. May I ask what the nature of your business is?"

"Certainly. I wish to befriend you, Mr. Highland."

"In what way?"

"In helping you recover the Gordo securities."

Highland's face became deathly white.

He looked first at Nick, then at his son, and finally let his gaze return to the detective.

"What do you know about the Gordo securities?"

"Considerable; but not as much as I should like to know. That is why I have sought this interview with you."

"Who are you?"

"My name is Nicholas Carter."

"What are you?"

"A detective."

"You already have some information about the Gordo securities, you say?"

"Yes."

"From whom did you get it?"

"From Juan Gordo."

"And now you come to me for more information? Is this a trick or an insult?"

"Neither. It is an act of friendship."

"Stop. You are a detective; you got your information up to date from Juan Gordo. He employed you to hunt me down?"

"Yes."

"And you have done it?"

"As you see."

"Then I am your prisoner?"

"No, sir. You are not the man I want."

"But you followed me from New York."

"Only to be convinced on the journey that some mistake has been made; that you are in some manner a victim and not a criminal. Therefore, I am anxious to find the right person and at the same time rescue you from your danger and restore you to your rightful standing before the world."

"Isn't that a strange confession to come from you to me after you admit you are employed by Juan Gordo to hunt me down?"

"Not at all. A true detective never knows employer or instructions after he has struck what he believes to be the right trail."

"You believed me guilty when you came on board this ship at New York?"

"Yes. Or, rather, I had no reason to believe you innocent."

"But you have now, you say?"

"True; else I would not have sought this interview with you."

"May I ask how you came to change your mind on the subject of the—the—lost securities?"

"It will be best for you, for the cause, and for my success in the end, if I withhold that information for the present," was Nick's quick reply, as he noticed the flash of fear which swept over the son's face at the question, and saw it change to a look of relief as he answered.

"If you believe me innocent, you must believe some one else guilty," said the elder Highland.

"A good deduction," smiled Nick.

"Whom do you suspect?"

"No one—yet. I have no knowledge of the affair," explained Nick, "except what I got from Juan Gordo. That, of course, pointed solely to you as the guilty party."

"Now I want to hear your side of the story. Then I may have a chance to strike the right lead."

"There is little more I can tell you than you have heard from Gordo. I presume he told you of the bonds his father left with me in trust for him and his mother?"

"Yes."

"And of their disappearance?"

"Yes."

"That I declared they had been stolen from my safe?"

"Yes."

"That immediately after we discovered that they were missing I disappeared and was supposed to have joined my son in some unknown place where he had preceded me?"

"That is so."

"Well, so far, he told you nothing but the truth. I did leave Havana by stealth, and I did join my son—whose whereabouts

were known only to myself—in New York City. That was my fatal mistake."

"Why did you make it?"

"I am ashamed to tell."

"Speak the truth, father," urged Royal.

"Then it was because—God forgive me!—I believed he had carried the bonds away with him. I followed him to New York to induce him to make restitution."

"And when too late learned that he was innocent?"

"Yes. Then my supposed flight fastened the brand of guilt upon me, and for two weeks I dared not return to Havana. I had not the courage to leave my hiding-place and go back to face the officers of the law whom I knew had been set upon my trail.

"It was a long struggle, but at last I conquered my cowardice and made up my mind to go home and surrender, little dreaming that I was shadowed on board this ship."

"Now, then, Mr. Highland," said Nick, in a business-like way, "we've got to the point where I wish to secure more information. Will you frankly answer some questions which I am going to put?"

"I will answer any and every question you may ask—to the extent of my power," was the unhesitating response.

"All right. Then first, who discovered the loss of the bonds?"

"I did."

"How?"

"Juan Gordo called one day to get a memorandum of their numbers for his mother, who was unable to find a similar memorandum which her husband in his life time always kept.

"I went to the safe to get them. The strong box was there, but the bonds were not in the box."

"When had you seen them last?"

"Three days before—the day on which Royal left for New York."

"Before or after he sailed?"

"Before."

"What was the circumstance under which you saw them that day?"

"In the same box with the Gordo bonds were two securities left by the senior Gordo to his niece, Inez Benito. He left them to her in trust until she should reach the age of twenty-one, and then they were to become her property outright.

"The young lady lacked a year of her majority, but had arranged to have the bonds discounted, or, rather, to sell her interest in them."

"On that day she called with another person, who inspected the securities for the second time.

"I drew up the agreement, and, as her guardian, consented to the negotiation.

"The money was paid over to her in my presence, and the instrument delivered, whereby the bonds would become the property of the discounter on Senorita Inez's twenty-first birthday."

"Who was the person who discounted the bonds?"

"An attorney from the United States."

"His name?"

"Anson Bryce."

"What part of the United States?"

"St. Louis."

"How did the young lady fall into this business transaction with Bryce?"

"She spent several months of last spring and summer in St. Louis, where she met him, I believe."

"A young man?"

"On the contrary, he must be all of sixty years."

"And this man, you say, saw the Gordo securities?"

"He saw them, but that is all. I had the box on the table in my office while he examined the bonds belonging to the young

lady. But I was not out of the room while he was there. Neither was Inez Benito. Besides, I replaced the box after he had gone away, and distinctly remember that the bonds were there then.

"The box was not taken from the safe from that time till three days after, when Gordo called to get their numbers. Nor was the safe left unlocked one minute at any time intervening. The box containing the bonds was locked when I took it from the safe for Gordo.

"The lock had not been tampered with, and the key had never left my pocket."

"Was there any other key to the box?"

"No."

"Who, besides yourself, knew the combination of the safe?"

"My son."

"In what form were the lost securities?"

"In three bundles. One contained Gordo's railroad bonds, in another was his United States securities, and the third, a small package, was the two one-thousand dollar bonds left to Senorita Benito."

"These three packages—were they all that the box contained?"

"No, a copy of Gordo's will and a few other family papers were kept there."

"And these extra documents——"

"Were not disturbed."

"Inez Benito's bonds—were they also taken?"

"Why, yes, of course."

"Anything else which you think of that might benefit me to know in my search for the securities?"

"Yes. Something very important. After a closer examination of the box than I at first made, I found some sedimentary stuff like dust scattered over the other papers and in the bottom of the box."

"Strange!"

"Yes, sir. Had it not been that the will

and other papers were not injured in any wise I would have come to the conclusion that the securities had been destroyed by spontaneous combustion."

"Did you reveal this discovery to any one?"

"No. It would not have helped me any."

"Have you the numbers of the missing bonds?"

"No, sir. I never had any such memorandum outside of the bonds themselves. I have had the securities in my safe for five years, and as I knew Gordo kept their numbers at his house, I failed to make a separate record of them. It was very foolish on my part, I know, but Gordo and I had implicit confidence in each other."

"And now that Gordo's memorandum is lost, no one knows what the numbers are?"

"I fear not."

"This St. Louis lawyer, Anson Bryce—what of him?"

"He left Havana the same evening of the day he discounted Inez Benito's two bonds."

"Where does Senorita Benito live?"

"With her aunt, Madame Gordo. The Gordo villa and grounds are about two miles from the center of Havana."

"Why did she want ready money?"

"To go away for the winter."

"Where?"

"To New Orleans."

"Why does she go?"

"To prosecute her studies in photography. She is a regular amateur photographic fiend. That's one reason."

"There is another, then?"

"Yes. At least, we think there is. Her cousin, Juan, is an unwelcome suitor. Of course that makes her stay in her aunt's house unpleasant."

"Is there a favored suitor?"

Nick saw the elder Highland shoot a quick glance at his son. He saw at the same

time that Royal scowled and returned the look significantly.

The reply did not therefore surprise him.

"There probably is. But that is the young lady's affair."

"It shall be my duty," mused Nick, "to look up Inez Benito as soon as I reach Havana. Then I shall probably have occasion to take a tack after Anson Bryce, lawyer, of St. Louis.

"Spontaneous combustion, eh? Not much. Those bonds are too valuable to be burned up. The dust in Highland's strong box is not the ashes of those missing securities—not by a long shot.

"I guess this case will not be so hard to get at after all."

CHAPTER III.

A LESSON IN PHOTOGRAPHY.

Nick Carter paced across the small state-room a score of times before he spoke again. Meanwhile the elder Highland sat with eyes fixed upon the floor, and the son stood following Nick with his gaze.

When the detective stopped in his pace up and down the stateroom it was to ask a question of Wilbur Highland.

"You are going back to Havana, you say, to surrender?"

"Yes. That is my intention."

"You must not do it."

"Why not?"

"It might make my task of trapping the real thief all the harder, and would do you no good."

"But isn't it too late now? We'll be in Havana to-morrow. I shall be recognized the moment I land."

"You must not land."

"Must not land? Why, how——"

"You and your son must remain on board this ship and return to New York," interrupted Nick.

The Highlands stared at him in silent wonderment, and Nick explained:

"I am well acquainted with the captain. It can easily be arranged. Come to my state-room at six o'clock in the morning, and I will see that you are comfortably and safely landed in New York on the return trip."

"Disguised?"

Nick nodded.

"That brings home to me another anxiety," said the elder Highland. "My wife and daughters—they——"

Again Nick interrupted.

"Leave that to me. Before I leave Havana, I will see that they will not worry about your absence."

"How long will this absence last?"

"That I can't tell. But I think you'll both eat your Christmas dinner at home—and enjoy it, too."

Nick Carter never made a trip anywhere or on the shortest notice but that he took with him the material for make-ups in various disguises.

When, therefore, the Highlands kept their engagement and entered his state-room at six o'clock next morning he was ready for them.

The captain of the ship had been taken into Nick's confidence and rendered the latter all necessary aid.

Nick had to depend on him for the necessary clothing which he needed in his transformation act.

While he worked on their disguises Nick continued his inquisition for information about Inez Benito and her friend, Anson Bryce, of St. Louis.

In this way he was told of a vicious and unexplained assault made upon Bryce on the latter's first visit to the office by a huge Newfoundland dog belonging to Senorita Benito.

Nick had reason to remember this incident to advantage later on.

When the passengers, later in the day, went ashore it was not noticed that the Highlands were not of the number.

But after the passengers had landed two remained on board. They were friends of the captain who were making the round trip as his guests.

No one who knew the Highlands would have recognized them in the well-disguised alleged guests of the captain.

And when the ship started on its return voyage to New York both men went with her.

On landing in Havana, Nick Carter went directly to a hotel which was largely patronized by visiting Americans.

While *en route* from the pier to the hotel, he purchased a newspaper and looking over the "personals," read this notice:

"Everett Carter, a young clubman, of St. Louis, U. S., and a distinguished member of the Missouri Amateur Photographic Society, is in the city registered at the — Hotel. Senor Carter visits Cuba for the purpose of photographing some of the most interesting scenery in and about Havana. He will be pleased to meet any of Havana's ladies and gentlemen who are interested in amateur photography before his return to St. Louis, which will be in a few days."

Now it so happened that this young man who bore Nick's family name was known to the latter. Nick had met him nearly a year before on a professional visit to St. Louis.

"I am a firm believer in an all-wise Providence which blazes the way of the just to success," muttered Nick. "Here is a man thrown into my path just when he can be of use to me in my plans. I must see Everett Carter without delay."

As soon as he reached the hotel he registered under an assumed name and then sent off two cable messages. One was addressed to Chick at New York. The other went to the chief of police in St. Louis.

Then he inquired whether Everett Carter,

of St. Louis, was in the house. Yes, Mr. Carter had arrived the night before from New Orleans.

Nick sent up a sealed card to Mr. Carter, and in response thereto was shown to that gentleman's suite of rooms.

At first Nick was not recognized because he was somewhat disguised, but he had no trouble in satisfying the young St. Louis clubman as to his identity.

"Here on professional business, I presume?" said the man from St. Louis, as he waved Nick to a chair.

"Of course. I seldom if ever travel for health or pleasure. Health I have always, and pleasure there is little outside of my calling."

"Wish I could aid you, but——"

"You can," interrupted Nick, "by letting me take your place for a few days while you hide away in retirement."

"By Jove! that is a strange request."

"Well, it may aid me materially in my work here. I am most anxious to get upon confidential terms with a certain resident of this city. That person, I learn, is a regular crank upon amateur photography. Do you see my design?"

"I think I do. But, my dear boy, you'll give yourself away."

"How?"

"You say this person is a crank on the subject of amateur photography?"

"Yes."

"Then you are liable to get into trouble. Suppose this person should talk 'shop' to you—should go into the theoretical parts of photography?"

"Then I should go into it with her."

"A *her*, eh?"

Nick nodded.

"Do I understand you to say you are up in amateur photography?"

"As far as most people go," smiled Nick.

"I guess you couldn't tell me much about it that I don't know."

"Well, my friend, I am at your service. Anything to help you out. I've not forgotten your services to my friend a year ago. Do you want to inveigle your fly into my web here?"

"No. I suppose I'll have to go hunting for my game, and through the medium of photography I'll reach her presence, and I hope, to some extent, her confidence."

"That's a pity," murmured Carter, looking absent-mindedly at Nick.

"A pity?" echoed the detective.

"Why, yes. If you could manage to get her into this room you might get a photograph of her at the same time you were creeping into her confidence."

"How so?"

"Do you notice that easy-chair over there near the window? Well, please observe that any one sitting in it would be in excellent light to be photographed."

"If he or she was willing."

"Willing or not. They would not know it. I placed that chair for the purpose of trying an experiment. You came very near being my subject, but a conviction that your call on me was not wholly one of mere friendship temporarily threw me off from my purpose."

"How were you going to arrange it?"

"Please cast your eyes upon that pair of curtains on the opposite side of the room. They are slightly looped back, and behind them is a concealed camera ready for action. The camera is focussed so as to center upon any chance occupant of that chair."

"I have run wires under the carpet from the camera to this table, with which I can at any moment 'fire' the camera. It is one of my eccentric experiments. You may find it useful."

Nick inquired closely into the mechanism

of the trap camera, so as not to spring it by accident, as he explained.

"I shall need an out-of-door outfit," he said, "for I want to visit my party, who lives on the outskirts of the city."

"What is the party's name?"

"Senorita Inez Benito."

At that moment some one tapped on the door. Carter bade the applicant enter.

It was a bell-boy, with a card, which he handed to Nick's host, who, as he took it, glanced at the name and sprang to his feet.

"Great Scott!" and then noticing the waiting lad, said, more calmly:

"Show the lady up, but don't be in too much of a hurry; give me time to get things straightened up."

He tipped the boy and followed him to the door.

As soon as the door closed behind the latter he rushed up to Nick and thrust the card in the detective's face.

"Is this a little joke on me?"

Without looking at the card, Nick smiled and replied:

"No; merely a piece of good luck for me, I should say. Your visitor is Senorita Benito herself?"

"But how do you know? You haven't looked at the card."

"Not necessary, my dear sir. I've been looking at you. Your face is as easy to read as this little piece of pasteboard."

"Well, what now?"

"What now? Why, remember I am Everett Carter, of St. Louis, whom the lady has come to see. You are—in the way. Remove yourself for the period of her visit, can't you?"

"I am onto your plan. Here"—grabbing up Nick's coat, hat, gloves and cane—"I'll take these things with me into the concealment of my bedroom, where, fortunately, I

can keep an eye on you and my—your caller. Ah! she's here."

There was a tap at the door.

The St. Louis man disappeared through an inside door as Nick called, "Come in."

There entered a lady of stately carriage, above the average height of woman, and closely veiled.

"You are Mr. Carter?" she inquired, in a deep, rich contralto voice.

"At your service, madame," said Nick, with a profound bow. "Will you sit down?" motioning to the chair to which the St. Louisian referred as part of his scheme for secret photography.

She, much to Nick's satisfaction, accepted the proffered seat and immediately raised her veil.

Nick saw a strikingly handsome young woman, though not a beautiful one in the full sense of the word. Senorita Benito's features were too masculine to be classed beautiful. Her complexion was very dark, her eyes were jet black, and her hair corresponded in hue.

She spoke in perfect English without even the suspicion of an accent.

"Pardon the boldness of my call, Mr. Carter," she said, as he stood respectfully silent before her. "I saw your arrival noticed in the paper this morning, and not being unknown to me, your presence in Havana was personally interesting."

"I scarcely understand what you mean, senorita," was Nick's reply, as she paused and smiled.

"I visited in St. Louis last spring. While there I met your sister."

CHAPTER IV.

THE HIDDEN CAMERA IS SPRUNG.

The truth flashed on Nick rather unpleasantly. He was standing on the verge of discovery.

"I have no recollection of my sister speaking to me about you, senorita," he said, coolly.

"Oh, I presume she forgot me as soon as I left her house. I called with a mutual friend. It was her monthly reception day, and I was only one of the scores who called. Shall I tell you how I knew you were her brother when I saw your arrival noted this morning?"

"I should be pleased to know."

"Why, I saw some of your photographic work in your sister's house. Being much interested in the art, I questioned her about it. She told me you did it, and at my request she gave me your name and address. I intended to call and chat with you about amateur photography before I left St. Louis, but I was called away sooner than I expected and missed that pleasure."

"For which I am duly thankful," said Nick to himself.

"So I made bold to call on you here. There is very little interest in the art in Havana, and very little chance to gratify my desire to become better acquainted with the science than my limited means has furnished me."

Nick seemed to readily fall in with her enthusiasm and share her interest in the discussion. The real Everett Carter from his concealment heard all which passed between Inez Benito and Nick, and was surprised at the almost perfect knowledge of photography which the latter disclosed while discussing the topic with the senorita.

At the end of an hour Senorita Benito announced her intention to leave.

"How long will you be in the city, Mr. Carter?" she asked, as she arose.

"Only a few days. I hope to get away day after to-morrow."

"Where do you go from here?"

"Back to St. Louis."

"Would you do me a favor, then?"

"How could I refuse you, senorita? Command me."

"Thanks. This will make a demand upon your confidence."

"Then make the demand."

"I want to send something secretly to a friend in St. Louis."

"It will be a pleasure to me to deliver it," was the gallant reply.

"You are very kind. I will have it ready for you to-morrow. Can you call on me at my aunt's place in the suburbs to-morrow about ten o'clock?"

"I shall be only too happy."

"You will find me under a large tree near the carriage gate waiting for you," she said.

"Be prompt; ten o'clock. Bring your photographic outfit. It will not look strange therefore, should any one see you talking to me."

"Depend on me, senorita."

"I can trust you to be discreet?"

"Implicitly. I've been in love myself."

She shot a swift look at him, then smiled, but did not blush.

"At ten to-morrow, then," she said.

"At ten to-morrow. I will be there."

Then she pulled the veil over her face and departed.

"You can come out now," said Nick, calling to the St. Louis clubman.

The latter came out from his concealment looking a bit worried.

"I say, old man!" he exclaimed. "You're not going to get me into trouble, I hope."

"With whom?"

"With that young lady. Say, I'd not like to have her enmity."

"Nor her favor, either, after I have done with her," muttered Nick. "Don't worry, Mr. Carter, she is walking right into a trap."

"You shall know when I round her up."

"But you told her you were going to St. Louis in a few days."

"I know it."

"And are you?"

"Sure."

"What for?"

"To nip my game."

"You said she was your game."

"Did I? Well, the party I'm after is the party she is sending that 'something' to."

"Who is it?"

"Now, do not be too inquisitive," laughed Nick.

"But if you go to St. Louis, what becomes of me?"

"You must lose yourself in the interior for a few days."

"My dear boy, what an opportunity I lost!" groaned the photographer.

"An opportunity lost? What was it?"

"To spring my 'trap' camera on her while she sat there in that chair. She would have been a great subject."

"Suppose you examine your plates."

"You don't mean you sprung the trap?"

"Senorita Inez Benito had her picture taken while I was talking to her or your hidden machine didn't work."

"I'll wager a hundred to one it didn't fail."

"Then develop and print the picture, and mind, I want one."

"You're not in love with the dark young lady, I hope."

"Professionally, I am. When you have developed the picture, I want one to study."

"Why?"

"I'll show you why when I get it, and you'll be surprised. When can you have the photographs ready?"

"To-morrow afternoon."

"Good! I may want to quit Havana to-morrow night. I believe a steamer leaves for New Orleans to-morrow night."

"Going to New Orleans?"

"Going to St. Louis by way of New Orleans."

"What will you do in St. Louis?"

"Deliver Inez Benito's 'something' to her friend."

"Ah! Poor Benito! Unfortunate friend!" sighed the clubman.

CHAPTER V.

A VALUABLE EXPERIENCE WITH THE CAMERA.

Late that evening Nick received a message from the chief of police of St. Louis. It ran thus:

"Yes. Anson Bryce is an attorney in good standing. He is now in Europe. Left St. Louis a month ago."

Nick read the message twice. Then he wrinkled his brows and thrust it into his pocket, muttering:

"That rather stumps me. It will complicate affairs at St. Louis."

He was due at the Gordo place at ten o'clock next day, and he was promptly on hand.

He found Inez Benito sitting on a rustic bench, beneath a tree near the entrance to the spacious grounds, true to her promise.

As he approached with his photographic outfit in hand, his quick eye saw an envelope lying on the ground near her feet.

When he came near enough, she greeted him thus, in a tone of voice barely loud enough for him to hear, and not loud enough to penetrate beyond the circle which was free from all other persons:

"The object which I wish you to take to St. Louis you will find in the envelope at my feet. Please drop your handkerchief on it and pick the two up together so that it will not be observed."

Nick did as bid, and the mysterious envelope was soon skillfully hidden away in an inside pocket of his coat.

"To whom am I to deliver it?" he asked.

"To one who will call for it."

"But how will I know it is the right person?"

"That you will discover when you examine the envelope."

"When will the person call for it?"

"That I can't tell. Maybe in a week, maybe not for a month."

"I may not be in St. Louis that long."

"Well, should you decide to go away give one day's notice of your intention by inserting a personal in the *Globe-Democrat*. Address it to 'Poindexter' and sign it 'Zemagay.' In that way you will notify the proper person. You will surely go to St. Louis in the next few days?"

"I leave by New Orleans steamer to-morrow night."

"Ha! Careful now, here comes one I don't want to suspect I've ever met you before. Remember, I rely on your honor and secrecy."

Before she could say more or Nick could move away, a horseman came dashing up the road, turned into the grounds, and reined up within a few feet of Inez Benito's rustic seat.

"Here is the owner himself," she lazily spoke, in a bored way, addressing Nick as if glad to turn him over to some one else. "He will doubtless grant you the privilege you ask."

Nick looked up at the horseman and was not surprised to see Juan Gordo, who a week before had employed him to hunt down the Highlands.

"This gentleman is an amateur photographer from the United States," said Inez.

"He has been asking for the privilege of taking some views from your estate. I presume, cousin, there will be no objection."

"Not unless he poaches on your preserves. I am surprised, Inez, that you are so indif-

ferent to this gentleman's mission, knowing your intense interest in his art."

Inez assumed a splendidly counterfeited frown, arose with an injured expression on her face, and started to walk up the avenue.

Juan instantly dismounted, and leading his horse, followed at her side.

Just as they were turning the angle in the road which took them from Nick's sight, a huge dog came bounding into their presence and greeted Inez with marks of brute delight.

"Ah!" commented Nick. "It is the dog which doesn't like Anson Bryce. What a remarkable-looking animal he is."

"And what a wonderful woman his mistress is," muttered the great detective, as he turned away and devoted himself to his supposed mission of photographing interesting views.

In this way he spent several minutes. Then he returned to the city proper.

On the way back he stopped and purchased a powerful magnifying glass.

After which he rejoined Everett Carter at the hotel.

"What success?" inquired the clubman, as Nick entered.

For answer Nick took the envelope out of his pocket which he had picked up out of the grass at Inez Benito's feet.

It was thick and bulky, somewhat soiled, and without directions of any kind.

On the face was pasted the half of a photographic landscape view taken by an amateur.

The sketch had been divided by irregular lines so that the torn side of the half pasted on the envelope was full of angles, curves and offsets.

Beneath the sketch were indorsed these words, in ink:

"To be delivered only to the person who shall present to the holder hereof the other half of the above photographic view in a form that will exactly fit the torn edge."

"Do you know what it contains?" inquired the clubman.

Nick shook his head.

"Have you finished her photograph?" he asked, changing the subject.

"Yes."

Everett Carter produced the photograph—one which he had already mounted.

Without even glancing at it casually with his naked eyes, Nick carried it into the clear light of the window, put the magnifying glass over it, and gazed at it steadily and intently for several minutes.

The St. Louisian watched him with wonder plainly written on his face. When Nick finally looked up, Carter cried:

"In Heaven's name are her features so small that you have to look at them through a microscope?"

"I was not looking at her features."

"Not looking at her features? Then what were you studying?"

"The contents of a note which was partly concealed in the bosom of her dress," came the astounding reply.

Carter stood and stared at the detective in speechless amazement.

"While she was sitting in that chair talking to me yesterday, she flung back the cape of her dress, and my eye caught sight of a crumpled piece of paper which she had evidently thrust into the bosom of the gown for concealment and safekeeping."

"Unfortunately for her, instead of going beneath both folds of the dress, it slipped in behind the outer covering of lace, and was partially exposed to my view when she brushed back her cape."

"The sight of it gave me the inspiration to make use of your experiment. I went to the table, and without her knowing it, she was photographed there."

"And with her the half-concealed note?"

"Exactly."

"What does it contain?"

"See for yourself."

The clubman applied the magnifying glass and studied the writing beneath the lace folds of the dress.

The letter had been roughly folded up before it was thrust away and only a small portion of one side of the sheet was exposed to the power of the camera.

To the naked eye the writing in the photograph was a mass of indistinct, unintelligible lines.

Under the glass it became so distinct as to be easily deciphered.

This is what Everett Carter read:

fear my old time
Carter is on my
have such a premo
the quicker we g
ds dispose of them for
get to Australia the so
be. Therefore send or
the other half so I m
the package from the s
itate their sale. Then M
ew Orleans at the St

days. Be sure there
scarriage. I don't trus
ld the other half be l
a serious predicam

The young clubman read over this fragment of the half concealed letter several times. Then laying the glass down, he looked helplessly at Nick.

"Since you have been so obliging with me, Mr. Carter," said Nick, "I am going to give you an idea of the business which brought me to Cuba."

"I am all anxiety to hear it," responded the clubman, sitting down and preparing to listen. Nick began:

"Several months ago a desperate, shrewd rascal named Fernando Yagamez got away from me, carrying with him two valuable documents. One is a confession which will prove the innocence of a man who has for

years suffered for another's crime. The other is a will which will put a worthy young woman into possession of a valuable estate.

"This Yagamez has slipped through my hands twice.

"A few weeks ago I got on his track. I followed him here to Havana. On my way from New York I fell in with and learned the story of a father and son who were returning to Havana to surrender as fugitives from justice.

"Valuable bonds which these men held in trust had disappeared, and being unable to account for the loss, the suspected men became alarmed and had fled to the United States.

"They were then on their way back, determined to face the worst and become prisoners rather than fugitives.

"I secured their confidence, learned their story, and, by questioning them closely, learned some valuable facts.

"I became convinced that Inez Benito was concerned in the disappearance of the bonds.

"Also that she was aided by an elderly appearing man, who called himself Anson Bryce, a lawyer from St. Louis.

"I firmly suspected from the first that this Anson Bryce was my man Yagamez in disguise.

"I was almost confirmed in this belief when I learned that Inez Benito had spent part of last spring and summer in St. Louis, at a time when I know Yagamez was there quite frequently.

"The only hitch in my theory is a message from the St. Louis chief of police, received in reply to my inquiry, stating that Anson Bryce is a prominent attorney of that city and has been absent for a month.

"This letter, a fragment of which you have read under the power of that glass, is undoubtedly from the girl's confederate.

"She had received it between the time she left home yesterday morning and her call at this hotel.

"It is reasonable to suppose that whatever letters pass between the two are fictitiously addressed.

"She probably called at the post-office while closely veiled; asked for and received the letter, read it before going home and was eager to carry out his requests.

"Yagamez, knowing the uncertainty of the mails between Cuba and the United States, and also fearing that he might be watched, is unwilling to trust the other half referred to in that letter to the postal authorities.

"She shares his fear of the mail, and having read the notice of your arrival in Havana, hits upon a novel and, as she believed, safe mode of getting 'the other half' to her confederate.

"I, as your supposed self, will carry her sealed envelope to St. Louis. She will mail the other half of the photographic landscape to Yagamez, and with it he or an agent will claim the envelope from me.

"Now, inside that envelope I am convinced is another 'other half' of something which is the important other half referred to by Yagamez in his letter to her.

"That is the article whose value is such that extraordinary precautions are taken to place it in Yagamez's hands as speedily and surely as possible."

"But have you any idea what is the use of the article enclosed in the envelope which Senorita Benito gave you?" asked the clubman.

"Yes. From his letter to her it is made plain that the missing bonds are in some safe in St. Louis. They are probably deposited there under similar conditions to those whereby I am to deliver this sealed envelope—by presentation of a missing half of some-

thing which acts as a seal to the package containing the bonds."

"Wonderful!" exclaimed the clubman, looking at Nick in astounded admiration.

"All of which convinces me," continued Nick, "that every detail of the plot was perfected before the bonds were stolen; even to arranging these 'half' checks."

"But did this Yagamez carry the bonds away with him to St. Louis?" asked Everett Carter.

"Not at all," smilingly replied Nick. "Yagamez is too shrewd to take such chances—to be caught with stolen property in his possession."

"Then how did they get there?"

"By express, likely. That would explain why some sort of claim check was needed—something which would make it absolutely impossible that the package should be delivered to the wrong party."

To prove this theory correct, Nick that same afternoon called at the express offices and made inquiry about packages which were consigned to St. Louis parties on the day when the bonds disappeared—or, rather, on the day of the last visit of Inez Benito and Anson Bryce to the office of Highland & Son.

What he sought he found.

At one of the offices he was told that a package weighing ten pounds was billed on that night to J—— R——, manager of the Lindell Hotel, St. Louis.

Nick had not the least doubt that the package contained the missing bonds, and that they were even then locked up in the Lindell Hotel safe.

He was firmly convinced, also, that in the envelope which Inez Benito had consigned to his care was that which was necessary to secure the bonds from the manager of the Lindell Hotel.

Is it not surprising that he was anxious to get away from Havana and reach St. Louis?

Before he left Everett Carter, the two held a long, confidential conference, and when Nick boarded the New Orleans steamer that evening Everett Carter was no longer in his rooms at the Havana hotel.

An inquiry for him at that place would have met the reply that Mr. Carter had gone to St. Louis.

The passengers were all aboard, and the gangplank had been pulled in when Nick's attention was attracted to a strange sight.

A huge Newfoundland dog with a white star on his forehead came bounding down the pier with his nose on the ground, as if on a scent.

He fetched up suddenly on the edge of the pier, gave a bark of what might be either dog delight or canine despair, and then, with a mighty spring, he cleared the intervening space of water and landed on the lower deck of the steamer.

Nick watched the dog's antics with intense interest.

Why? Because he had seen the animal before.

It was the same animal which so lovingly and demonstratively greeted Inez Benito after she left Nick the day before.

It didn't take much thought to account to Nick for the dog's queer action in this case.

He had followed some one to whom he was attached.

That some one was on the steamer.

It could be none other than Inez Benito.

As the dog made his leap, Nick noticed a dark-faced, heavily-bearded young man turn hastily out of the assembled passengers on deck and disappear in the main saloon.

The dog would have followed, but he was forcibly seized and carried to the engine dock by the porter and his assistants.

"Inez Benito on board disguised in male attire," muttered Nick. "Now what in thunder does that mean? It complicate matters considerably."

CHAPTER VI.

LOST IN THE GULF OF MEXICO.

Before the steamer passed Morro Castle she was fighting against huge head seas.

A fierce storm was raging upon the gulf, and a rough night was before the passengers.

Nick did not retire to his state-room. The war of the elements had an unusual charm for him.

So holding hard to the rail of the steamer and clinching his cigar firmly between his teeth, he watched the vessel's fight with the waves and the wind.

It was about one o'clock when he suddenly heard above the roar of the wind and waves a human voice crying:

"Danger on the port bows! Luff! Luff!"

Almost instantly thereafter the steamer received a tremendous shock.

Nick had leaned far over the rail in an effort to see the source of the danger.

The shock took him by surprise, and before he fairly realized what had happened, he pitched headlong into the sea.

At the same time he heard a cry go up:

"Man overboard!"

Then, it seemed to him that the steamer changed its course and almost ran over him.

Down into the seething waters he went, he hardly knew how far, but not for an instant did he lose his self-possession.

When he at last came to the surface, he could see nothing of the steamer.

No better swimmer lives than Nick Carter. He did not undervalue his swimming abilities, but he realized his utter helplessness in a seething storm-beaten sea at dead of night, with no knowledge of any haven of safety being near. "Might as well swim around this spot a little," thought Nick.

"It's all water here, but the steamer grazed something more solid, and whatever it was it would be a help to me in my present fix if I could reach it."

While such thoughts ran through Nick's brain, he imagined he saw the gleam of a pair of eyes to the left of him. Presently an object which had somewhat the appearance of a huge, hairy face rose above the water not twenty feet away, and Nick discovered that his mysterious companion in misfortune was the Newfoundland dog, whose strange appearance on the steamer he had noted.

The huge animal swam up to Nick's side and gave him almost a human look of friendship. What was more, he refused to leave his new-found companion.

Occasionally he would swim ahead somewhat, only to return again.

It finally dawned upon Nick's mind that the dog wished to go ahead more rapidly, but was unwilling to abandon his comrade in misfortune.

Thereupon the detective put one arm over the dog's neck.

The result was what Nick expected.

Without hesitation, the dog started off on a straight course and made steady progress through the rough water, Nick swimming by his side.

The brute was a magnificent swimmer, and man and beast yoked together as it were, moved with considerable dispatch straight ahead in front of the wind.

Half an hour passed in this way when there came to Nick's ears a sound which could not be mistaken. It was the sound of waves beating against the shore.

They were approaching land of some kind.

This land might be as dangerous as the sea, but he gave himself up to the instincts of his brute friend.

Almost before he knew it a great wave seized man and dog in its powerful hold and hurled them forward with great force and rapidity amid a roaring sound which was fairly deafening.

Nick lost complete control of himself and also got separated from the dog.

Then came a shock which seemed to him as if the earth had fallen on him and he lost consciousness.

CHAPTER VII.

NICK CARTER IN ST. LOUIS.

When Nick regained his senses, he was conscious of something warm and velvety passing over his face.

The gray light of morning made nearby objects perceptible.

He looked up and met the great, soft eyes of his dog friend.

It was he who had been trying to call Nick back to life by licking the latter's face.

When the dog realized that Nick was alive he evinced his joy with a bark of delight, and began to jump around in a delirium of canine pleasure.

Then Nick took a survey of his surroundings.

He was not long in deciding that he was on one of those low, treeless islands or reefs, which are scattered through the gulf south of the Florida Peninsula.

Daylight came, and with it the storm disappeared.

Later in the day, a lumber schooner hove in sight. Nick succeeded in attracting attention, and he and his dog friend were taken off the reef—for it was scarcely more than that.

In due time they were landed at Key West.

While yet on the island Nick learned the dog's name by chance.

In talking to the noble beast, he said:

"You have done me a service, old fellow, I'll never forget."

At the word "done" the dog gave a yelp and precipitated himself upon Nick in a whirlwind of affection.

This surprised Nick, and he repeated the sentence.

The dog repeated his demonstration.

Then Nick spoke the sentence in fragments until he realized that it was the word "done" which excited the shaggy hero.

That set the detective to thinking. Finally he laid his hand on the dog's head and said:

"Good Don."

All doubt was at once dispelled. The dog's name was Don beyond the shadow of a question.

Two days later Nick quietly slipped into New Orleans. He and his dog friend sought the house of a detective of that place with whom Nick had had a long acquaintance.

Here man and dog managed to pass into other identities. The New Orleans detective furnished Nick with material for a disguise, and after the patient work of half an hour Nick Carter had transformed himself into as fine a specimen of an English tourist as one can find on either continent.

All the time Nick was at work Don sat looking on, apparently much interested. When the work was done Don seemed to approve. At least, he gave several low barks and danced around the detective as much as to say, "I know you. I know you. You can't fool Don."

Then Nick set to work on Don with dyes. The dog's glistening black coat was dyed a dunnish brown. Even the white star in his forehead was obliterated.

This work required much more time than Nick took in perfecting his own disguise. But when it was done even Don's own mistress—if she were still alive—would not know him.

With Don at his heels, Nick started out to gather up some information of which he stood in much need.

He secured files of New Orleans and St. Louis papers, from which he learned that the steamer on which he left Havana had

collided with an unknown schooner at dead of night during a fierce storm.

Luckily, she struck the schooner at an acute angle and glanced off without serious damage, although she careened so far that for some moments she was in great danger of being swamped.

Nothing was afterward heard of the unfortunate schooner, and it was feared that the vessel, with all on board, was lost.

One of the steamer's passengers went overboard when the collision occurred, and was lost.

He was seen to pitch into the sea, and after the steamer righted an effort was made to save him. But owing to the fact that in the accident the steamer was thrown out of her bearings, it is probable that, in trying to find him, the course of the vessel carried it away from him.

The unfortunate passenger was Everett Carter, the well-known young clubman of St. Louis, who was on his way home by way of Havana after a photographic tour of the West Indies.

As Nick read this announcement his brows contracted, and a troubled look settled upon his face.

"That is going to complicate my work seriously, I fear," he muttered. "As soon as Carter learns of his reported death he, of course, will turn up in St. Louis in order to relieve his friends' sorrow. Then it must be known by Inez Benito and Yagamez that she entrusted that precious envelope to some one who was posing under an assumed name."

"Luckily I placed that envelope in my belt with other valuables, and it was saved from the sea, though somewhat damaged by salt water."

"Don, old boy, the quicker we get to St. Louis the better."

Twenty-four hours afterward the supposed English tourist and his dun-colored dog

landed in the unrivaled new passenger station of the Missouri metropolis.

Instead of going to a hotel, Nick engaged a room at a quiet boarding-house on Olive street, where he made arrangements for the safe and comfortable keeping of Don while he was seeking for certain necessary information. His first visit was to the office of Anson Bryce, the attorney.

Mr. Bryce was still absent, he was informed, but was expected home within a week. In fact, he had sailed from Liverpool two days before.

Where was he on the 5th of November? The clerk would inform the gentleman if the latter would wait till he consulted some letters.

Ah, yes. Here was a letter written by Mr. Bryce at Havana, November 3d, in which he announced his intention to sail for New York that day.

There was another letter written by him at New York on the 7th, just before he sailed for Liverpool.

Therefore, on the 5th Mr. Bryce must have been nearing New York, on his way from Havana.

Nick went away with a new puzzle fixed upon his mind.

His next step was to telegraph his assumed name and address to his wife, a precaution he never failed to follow while away from home for reasons which will be shown presently.

Then he hunted up the address of Everett Carter in the city directory, which, he found, was a building devoted to bachelor apartments.

To his inquiry for Mr. Carter, the janitress, as Nick expected, recited the story of the young clubman's fate as announced three days before in all the newspapers.

"So," thought Nick, "he has not yet returned or rectified the mistake."

From the janitress he got Everett Carter's sister's address and went straight to the latter's residence for the purpose of taking her into his confidence and lifting from her the sorrow she must be suffering over the supposed death of her brother.

A servant met him at the door and took his card—a blank card on which was written:

"A gentleman to see you, with news of your brother."

He was shown into a reception-room, where he was joined almost immediately by a young lady whom he knew was Everett Carters' sister by the strong family resemblance.

Much to his surprise, her face expressed no grief. On the contrary, it beamed with happiness.

She held his card in her hand as she advanced, and said, before he had a chance to speak:

"I suppose you are another reporter to get the good news of my brother's return. A *Globe-Democrat* man just left ten minutes ago. It's strange how you newspaper men get news. 'Tis not an hour since I got Everett's telegram."

"Then it is true?" he said, inquiringly. "Your brother was not lost as reported."

"Read that. It will tell you all I know, yet it is enough, and I'm so happy."

She handed a telegram to Nick.

It was dated that day at Memphis, and read:

"Just heard of my reported death, and hasten to notify you of the mistake. Will be home to-morrow morning and can explain how mistake occurred.

"EVERETT CARTER."

Nick congratulated her on the good news and took his departure.

It was nearly dark, and he went to the nearest restaurant and partook of a substantial meal. Then he went to his room on Olive street.

As he entered the house he met the landlady in the hall, who said:

"Oh! by the way, sir, a gentleman called to see you half an hour ago, and——"

"Called to see me!" exclaimed Nick, in surprise. Then, as he thought of the disguised Inez Benito, as he saw her on board the steamer, he asked, "Can you describe him?"

"Oh, that's not necessary. He's up in your room waiting for you. Seemed to make himself at home without asking permission. I hope it's all right, sir."

Nick made no reply, but went up-stairs three steps at a skip. Without ceremony, he opened the door of his room and entered.

A young man sat lazily engulfed in the arms of the easiest chair in the room puffing away at a cigar with so much vigor that he was half eclipsed by the smoke.

"Chick!" exclaimed Nick, the moment he had closed the door behind him.

"Hello, Johnny Bull," greeted Chick. "Is it raining in Lunnon? I see you have your trousers turned up."

Nick laughed in spite of his interest in this unexpected meeting with his assistant.

"What on earth brought you to St. Louis?" he asked.

"I followed my man."

"Your man? Who?"

"Royal Highland."

"What! Do you mean Royal Highland is in St. Louis?"

"I don't mean anything else. Obeying your telegram from Havana, I put the Highlands under my eagle eye the minute they landed in New York.

"Just as soon as the young fellow had his father comfortably located he made a bee-line to the depot and purchased a ticket to St. Louis. I came out with him.

"We got here this morning. I left him at the Lindell.

"I telegraphed to your wife for your address this afternoon. Much to my surprise, the answer located you here.

"Say, Nick, what brought Royal Highland to St. Louis?"

"To find a man named Anson Bryce."

"What for?"

"To try and save the woman he loves," was Nick's unhesitating reply.

Chick smoked on and waited for Nick to say more.

The great detective took several turns across the floor, and then stopping before his assistant, he said, with great earnestness:

"Chick, this is fate. Providence is aiding us in the round-up. It will be a badly messed job if we don't get the irons on Yagamez this time, and not only recover the missing bonds, but also the confession and will of the late Durrell Weston."

"But my man—Highland——" began Chick.

"Never mind him. I know what he'll do. And you are needed for more important work."

CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE TRAIL OF A SHREWD SCOUNDREL.

Nick lost no time in fully informing his assistant of all which had occurred since he left New York for Cuba, concluding:

"It follows, of course, that Inez Benito is in St. Louis disguised in male attire.

"Why she changed her mind so soon after delivering the envelope to me if it was a change of mind which sent her aboard the same steamer with me, I have not been able to decide.

"But the most plausible explanation of the whole affair is that she mistrusts Yagamez's fairness toward her and has laid her plans to test his loyalty, and at the same time keep him in her power.

"Therefore she planned to join him here, maybe, against his desires, and see that he did not betray her. In order to do this, she arranged that the check necessary to get the bonds from the Lindell's safe would be within reach at a few minutes' notice, but not in her possession, and also not where Yagamez would be able to put his hands on them.

"Depend on it, Inez Benito has some plan in her head to drive a bargain with Yagamez.

"He is a mighty slick party, but I shouldn't wonder if he is trying to add Inez to his already long string of victims, and has met in her his match.

"My supposed death and consequent loss of the envelope enclosing the check for the bonds must have completely demoralized her plans and carried consternation to her and Yagamez, for without the check it would be a dangerous undertaking for either to try to get the package of bonds from the Lindell's safe. It might lead to their arrest, for it would surely require a disclosure of the contents of the package and an explanation of their shipment from Havana."

"But look here, Nick," interrupted Chick. "Do you know where Benito or Yagamez are located in his city?"

"No."

"Then what are your plans to find them?"

"That is where Providence again comes to our aid. To-morrow morning's newspapers will contain the account of Everett Carter's return. It is scarcely probable that neither Inez nor Yagamez will see the notice.

"It therefore follows that Everett Carter is most likely to receive a call from Inez or Yagamez, the former in her disguise, most probably, at his sister's residence soon after his arrival.

"Now, I intend to be where I will hear what passes between Carter and his caller

when they meet. You must be on the outside ready to follow the visitor when the visitor leaves the house—and on your life not lose your party. If we once locate one we'll find the other.

"That done, the rest of our work will be easy."

"Nick, you're a peach," was Chick's admiring verdict.

It was nearly eleven o'clock that night when Nick called on Everett Carter's sister for the second time.

He asked for a private interview, and the request was somewhat reluctantly granted.

He then took the lady into his full confidence and left untold nothing of the deception which he and her brother had practiced upon Inez Benito.

"I make all this explanation, madame," he continued, "for a purpose. I feel confident that your brother will not be in this house long to-morrow morning until he will have a visitor. It is my desire to be where I can hear what passes at that meeting without being seen or my presence suspected by the visitor."

"But isn't this a most unusual request? My brother may not——"

"Oh, I shall see your brother first as soon as he arrives. I wish to do nothing without his knowledge or consent."

So it was arranged, and in order that his presence at that house might not be suspected, he was kindly offered accommodations for the night with lodging in the house, after he satisfied the young lady as to his identity.

The next morning's newspapers all announced the unexpected and sensational return of the well-known young clubman, Everett Carter, whose supposed drowning in the Gulf of Mexico while *en route* from Havana to New Orleans, had been duly published some days previously.

Everett Carter reached his sister's resi-

dence at nine o'clock the next morning, and had a confidential conference with Nick and his sister.

It was nearly noon before what Nick so anxiously waited for occurred.

A young man rang the bell and asked to see Mr. Carter in private on most important business.

The servant, previously instructed, showed the caller into the library, where Nick was concealed behind some curtains in a dark corner farthest away from the window.

He could see the visitor by peeping through a narrow slit between the curtains without any possibility of being seen himself.

"As I suspected," thought Nick. "It is Inez herself in the same disguise in which she left Havana. Ha! here comes Carter. I wonder if she will be surprised when she sees him, or does she suspect?"

Everett Carter entered the library and closed the door behind him.

Inez turned, faced him and showed plainly by her stare that she was disappointed.

"You wish to see me?" inquired Carter.

"I called to see Mr. Everett Carter."

"Then Everett Carter is at your service," smiled the man before her.

"Are you Everett Carter, who was some days ago reported lost overboard from a steamer *en route* from Havana to New Orleans?"

"I am the same Everett Carter—the only one of the name in St. Louis."

"And—and—how did you escape?"

"That is very easily explained," he laughed. "I was not on board the vessel which made that narrow escape."

"But you were in Havana on the —th of November?"

"I was."

"While you were there did you receive a call from a young lady?"

"I did not."

There was a pause. Then she reached into a concealed pocket, took therefrom something which Nick at once recognized as the missing half of the photographic scene which was pasted upon the envelope in his possession.

"Do you recognize this?" she asked.

"I never saw it in my life," was his cool reply, as he handed it back to her.

She replaced it whence it had been taken and said:

"Pardon my seeming impertinence, but I assure you a mistake of some kind has been made involving the affairs of a friend of mine; I would like to ask whether you had any visitor to your room at the — Hotel that day?"

"Why, yes. Now that I think of it, I had."

"Ah! a gentleman or lady?"

"A gentleman."

"You were there all the time he was?"

"On the contrary, I was compelled to be out, and I left him to amuse himself for some time."

"Do you mind telling me who this gentleman was?"

"Certainly not. Though bearing my family name, he is no relative. His name is Carter; he's from New York."

"His business?"

"A detective—the best in the country. Have you never heard of Nick Carter?"

The dark forehead of the disguised girl's face turned slightly paler to belie her reply.

"The name is not familiar to me. Would you mind describing this—Nick Carter to me?"

The young clubman complied, and in a few words drew such a clear picture of Nick as he appeared that day in Havana and again on the steamer, that Inez could have no doubt of who it was to whom she gave her envelope.

"When did you last see your friend the detective?" was her next inquiry.

"Next day. He borrowed some of my photographic apparatus for several hours. When he returned them he announced his intention of leaving that night for New Orleans."

"Humph! That was the steamer from which you were reported to have been lost?"

"So it was. But I didn't leave Havana till the next steamer after that one."

"Did it ever occur to you that it might have been your friend the detective of the same name who was lost overboard from that steamer?"

Nick's eyes became fixed anxiously on Carter. To his entire satisfaction, he had proofs that the latter was a magnificent actor.

The shock of surprise which the clubman assumed must have completely disarmed Inez Benito.

"Great Heaven!" he cried, "I see it now. What a stupid idiot I've been not to realize before how the mistake was made."

After a few more words exchanged with Carter, the visitor took advantage of what seemed to be her host's stupefaction over the sudden realization of his friend's fate, to leave without being questioned in turn.

"Well," exclaimed the clubman to Nick, as the latter emerged from his concealment when Inez was gone. "Is it she?"

"Beyond a doubt. And she believes me, with her precious envelope, to be at the bottom of the Gulf of Mexico."

"Do you think this belief is a relief or a disappointment to her?"

"I give it up. Between her supposed escape from my trap and the loss of the envelope I am inclined to think she is willing to give up the latter for the sake of the former."

Several hours later Chick burst in on Nick at his room on Olive street.

"Well, my boy?" was Nick's greeting.

"Your game is treed. Inez Benito has been run to cover."

"Explain."

"I traced her directly to a fashionable boarding-house on Park avenue, where she has a rear room on the second floor.

"She had not been there half an hour until an elderly man with long, gray hair and a white beard called to see her and was sent up to her room."

"Yagamez!"

"Undoubtedly."

"You followed him when he left?"

"Yes—for some distance."

"Do you mean to say you lost him?"

"I hate to admit it. But he was too much for me. While passing through a quiet cross street he came to a carriage which had evidently been waiting for him. Into that he jumped and was whirled away while I stood three blocks from a cab or public conveyance of any kind. But, Nick, I have the number of his carriage."

The detective smiled.

"Much good that will do you. Remember who it is we are dealing with. If we hunted up that carriage driver it would be only to discover that Yagamez had been set down maybe blocks from his hiding-place. Men of his care never leave precaution behind."

Chick looked crestfallen.

"Never mind, though," said Nick, cheerily. "We must not lose sight of Inez. All we've got to do is to watch her in the daytime. She'll hardly venture out at night. She may lead us to Yagamez's haunts. If that means fails I have another that we will make use of."

Chick went back to the vicinity of the Park avenue house, and satisfying himself that the inmate of the second story rear room was in, he watched the place closely till eleven o'clock that night, but without avail.

Inez did not leave the house nor did any one enter who at all answered the description of Yagamez.

Meanwhile Nick went to the Lindell Hotel and secured a private interview with the manager.

"You have in your safe," he said, "a package which you received by express from Havana, Cuba, several weeks ago?"

"I have," was the reply, as the manager looked Nick over sharply. "You are the second man who, within an hour has inquired about that package."

"Indeed. The other inquirer, I suppose, was an elderly appearing man with long gray hair, white beard, and——"

"On the contrary," interrupted the manager, "he had long, black hair, a reddish beard, and was not even middle-aged."

Nick made no comment in answer to this correction, but having mentally noted the description, he asked:

"Did this man try to get the package? Did he claim it?"

"Why, yes. That is, he seemed to know all about the circumstances surrounding its deposit with us, but claimed that the check proof provided for its redemption had been lost, or, rather, accidentally destroyed."

"So he wanted to know whether he could not get it without this check proof?"

"Exactly."

"Of course you told him it would be impossible."

"Why, certainly. I had no hesitation in telling him that under no circumstances would we deliver the package without the full requirements indorsed on the face of it being fulfilled, unless it was to the party who sent it to us."

"The party who sent it to you?" echoed Nick. "Why, do you know who that is?"

"Certainly. The letter which accompanied the package explained that."

"Oh, yes. From Anson Bryce?"

"Why, of course. I told him Mr. Bryce would be home in a week and then there would be no trouble about getting the package out."

"Then what?"

"Then he went away."

"But if anybody produced the check claim for the package, as required by the conditions indorsed on it, you would give it up?"

"Why, certainly."

Nick calmly reached in his pocket and produced the envelope which Inez Benito had given to him.

Just as unconcernedly he tore open the envelope and took therefrom some blank paper wrapped around the fragment of a five-dollar United States banknote which had been torn irregularly into halves from side to side.

On the half which Nick produced was the number B17831531.

The manager's eyes fairly bulged with surprise.

"Will you go to your safe and see whether this number corresponds to the number on the other half of the bill pasted on the package?"

"It is not necessary," was the reply. "I have a memorandum of it here. The number is the same. You have in your hand the other half of the bill pasted on the package. It is not necessary to fit the parts together."

"Then I can have the package?"

"Yes, if you'll explain to me why the other applicant tried to get it, and how it comes that you have the check claim which he said was destroyed."

"I'll willingly tell you all you wish to know, but I don't want the package—just yet."

"First, you never were more mistaken in your life than you are in believing that the package was sent to you by Anson Bryce."

"Hh?"

"Anson Bryce was on his way from Havana to New York on the day the package was left at the express office in Havana."

"Then who sent it?"

"The most consummate scoundrel out of State prison."

"The man who tried to get it without the check?"

"You've guessed it."

"What is in the package?"

"Bonds worth two million dollars."

"Who are you?"

"I am Nick Carter."

"Not the great New York detective?"

"The same."

"Good Lord, what a predicament for me to be in," groaned the hotel man.

"If you follow my instructions to the letter, you'll come out of it harmless and far from being a loser," encouraged Nick.

"Oh, I'm in your hands entirely."

"That's right. The bonds are safe in your care till we catch the thieves."

From the Lindell, Nick went to the *Globe Democrat* office, where he left an advertisement for the next day's issue.

Then he went to his room and heard Chick's report.

That closed their business for the day, and half an hour later they were sound asleep.

Both were up and dressed early.

Their first act after reaching the street was to enter an all-night coffee house and get a bite of breakfast.

Then they made their way to Park avenue.

"I see no other way," said Nick, as they went along. "We must watch Benito closely to-day. If that doesn't turn up Yagamez, we must take chances on the advertisement, and the dog, for I'm sure he can't hoodwink Don with his artistic and numerous disguises."

As they neared the Park avenue house, Chick called Nick's attention to an unusual commotion at that place, early as it was. Several servants came flying out of the house.

One started off pell-mell down the avenue in the opposite direction, and another flew up the street toward the detectives.

Nick seized him by the arm as he was passing, and inquired:

"What's the matter down there?"

"Let me go," panted the fellow. "The man in the second-story rear room has been murdered. I'm going to notify the police."

And he dashed on like mad before finishing his startling announcement.

"Chick," cried Nick, "he said the man in the second story rear room. That is Inez Benito. She's murdered."

"It's suicide, Nick."

"I don't believe it. Yagamez is capping his work with blood! Come! We must get to that room before the police."

CHAPTER IX.

HOW INEZ BENITO DIED.

When Nick Carter and his assistant reached the Park avenue boarding house they were met at the front door by the landlady, who seemed to be wild from excitement.

Before Nick could say a word she exclaimed:

"You are a doctor? For Heaven's sake go up and see if he's alive or dead."

Without hesitating a moment, the two detectives hastened up stairs and entered the rear room, noting at the same time that while all the house was in a turmoil of excitement, the room in the rear was wholly abandoned.

The door stood ajar. Nick pushed it open and entered, followed closely by Chick.

A number of the panic-stricken boarders and servants, as well as the landlady herself,

plucked up courage enough to follow and now stood crowded around and in the doorway.

Nick's professional eye took in the situation in a few quick, sweeping glances.

The occupant of the room was sitting in a chair at a table facing away from the door.

The arms were folded upon the table and the head reclined upon the arms.

The clothing on the body was saturated with blood.

It didn't take ten seconds for Nick to discover that the victim had been stabbed several times through the back to the heart.

Turning to the crowd at the doorway, he asked the landlady and her servants and boarders to go down stairs and wait together till he joined them, at the same time assuring them that the unfortunate person was stone dead.

As soon as they were gone, Nick said to Chick:

"The murderer entered by the door from the hall behind her. The windows are secure, as you see, and the blinds closed.

"He found her asleep just as the body now reclines and stabbed her to death so suddenly that there were only a few convulsions of the body—not violent enough to throw her out of position.

"Then the murderer searched her clothes, looking for something he didn't find."

"How do you know he didn't find it?" asked Chick.

"Because he afterward searched everywhere. See the papers and materials scattered over the floor."

"He may have searched through those things first," suggested Chick.

"No, he didn't, for he left some of the blood from his hands on them, and that proves that he searched the clothing on her body first. Then he washed his hands in that bowl over there before he left the house."

"And he didn't find what he committed the murder for?"

"Scarcely, since I have it in my possession."

"The half of the five dollar note?"

"That's it."

"Yagamez did this?"

"Without a doubt."

"How did he get in the house?"

"We must find out."

They soon joined the awe-stricken inmates of the house in the large dining-room.

There Nick rapidly drew out this information:

The victim had rented the room several days before.

He seemed to be particularly anxious about the security of the windows, and was pleased because there was no entrance to the back yard except through the house itself.

He never went out at night, and had no callers except one, an oldish man, with gray hair and white beard, who had called twice.

Both times while he was in the room their voices were heard raised as if in a quarrel.

The night previous, the roomer was heard walking up and down the floor as late as midnight. When the landlady retired she stopped at his door and asked if anything was needed. He opened the door a few inches, looked out, replied that there was not, and shut the door again.

She was quite sure he didn't secure it again on the inside.

A servant girl, in coming down early in the morning, found the door to the room ajar.

She peeped in and saw the young man sitting at the table apparently asleep.

Moved by some cause she could not explain, the girl went in and touched the body to awake him.

The blood-soaked garments almost scared the life out of her.

As soon as the household was aroused, every door and window was examined, and not one was found unsecured or open.

"Was everybody in the house who belonged here when you went to bed?" Nick asked the landlady.

"Everybody but the cook."

"Where was she?"

"She had gone to the theatre with her young man. Afterward she says he took her to supper, and she didn't get in till after one o'clock."

"How did she get in?"

"By the basement door, to which she carried a latch-key."

The cook was summoned from the kitchen. She was plainly frightened almost out of her wits.

In answer to Nick's questions, she declared that she had closed the door herself and knew the latch caught, for she tried it after the door was shut.

No, she didn't put up the chain. She never did, as she never knew what other servants were out, and she never thought of the lateness of the hour.

Then, with considerable hesitation, she admitted that she was very drunk when she came home, so much so that one of her escorts had to unlock the door for her.

One of them? Were there two?

Yes. A friend of her young man. Her young man was a barkeeper, and he, too, was somewhat intoxicated. His friend was the soberest of the three. She gave him the latch-key to open the door.

Did he give it back to her.

Oh, yes. She was sure of it. The key was even then in her pocket up stairs.

"Go get it and bring it here," said Nick.

The girl hastened off, but when she came back her face was very pale and her agitation had been doubled.

She extended her hand toward Nick. In her fingers she held a key, and she gasped:

"He must have made a mistake. It is not my key at all, sir."

Nick looked at Chick triumphantly. Then he got the address of the cook's "young man," and, accompanied by Chick, started out to find the barkeeper. As they left the house they passed two policemen, and a physician, who had just arrived.

The cook's young man was soon found. He freely admitted his "racket" with the cook.

Yes, it was true. There was a third party, a ranchman from Texas, named Wild-Dick Wild.

No, he had not known Wild long, only, in fact, for a few days, during which time the man spent a good deal of time at the saloon where he kept bar.

Wild had come across him and the cook at supper after leaving the theatre and had generously opened several bottles of wine for them.

All three, he admitted, got pretty drunk.

No, he didn't know where Wild put up, but he supposed the rancher would be at the saloon some time during the day.

"I guess he's seen the last of his chance friend, Dick Wild," remarked Nick, as he and his assistant left the saloon.

"The barkeeper is not mixed up in the killing, Nick," said Chick.

"No. The barkeeper and the cook have only been blind instruments in Yagamez's hands.

"We've got to strike quick or our game will get away."

"That's true. But how are we to do it? The fellow is no doubt in a brand-new disguise by this time. The ranchman and the old man will never be seen again."

"Then how will we discover him?"

"Through the dog."

"I don't understand."

"Then let me tell you. In talking to the

Highlands about the bond robbery while I was making them up in their disguises in my state-room just before we reached Havana, we discussed this man Anson Bryce.

"Thereby I learned a rather remarkable incident about Anson Bryce and the dog Don.

"It seems that the dog had taken a deadly dislike to the man, and on the first visit of Inez and the false Bryce to the Highlands' office, the dog followed them and made a desperate attack upon the supposed St. Louis lawyer.

"It was all that Inez and the Highlands could do to keep the dog from killing the villain.

"Now, I know enough about dogs to know that they never forget their enmities.

"If Don met Yagamez to-day he would undoubtedly renew that attack from which he was pulled off in Havana.

"And no disguise which Yagamez could invent would conceal his identity from that dog. I'm sure of it, and I'm going to depend on Don to help us find him."

"But, Nick, St. Louis is a mighty big place, even for a dog to search."

"Oh, I'll make that part of the dog's work easy. Read that."

Nick produced a copy of that morning's *Globe-Democrat* and pointed to a paragraph advertisement in the locals, which ran as follows:

"Poindexter.—If Poindexter wishes to secure a very important package he will meet Zemagay in front of the new Union Passenger Railroad Station to-day promptly at twelve o'clock, prepared to prove her rights thereto. Zemagay will hold the article in question in his right hand.

"ZEMAGAY."

"Now, if Yagamez sees that advertisement, he'll be on hand to see who has used his signature, knowing that Inez is dead."

"I half doubt your confidence in the dog

to pick this man out in a crowd disguised as he will be," said Chick. "It has been some weeks since the dog came in contact with him."

"True, but I'm going to remind Don of him in a manner that will be a powerful incentive to the dog."

CHAPTER X.

THE WORK OF DON, THE DOG DETECTIVE.

They proceeded at once to Nick's quarters on Olive street, and secured Don.

The dog was delighted to get out of the house.

They took him straight to the Park avenue house, and with a little explanation, got him admitted to the room where the tragedy had been enacted.

Meanwhile the house was in a greater uproar than ever over the discovery that the murdered person was a woman.

The dog's delight at the discovery of his mistress was soon turned into consternation and grief which was almost human when the intelligent animal at last realized that she was dead.

Presently Don's nostrils began to quiver. He sniffed the air and put his nose upon the carpet. A deep, hoarse growl followed.

Slowly he walked around the room with his nose on the floor. The growls grew louder and fiercer, while the bristles on his back stood up to indicate the savage feeling within him.

The longer Don walked around that room the stronger became his excitement.

"Now we have our man if we can get him within half a block of this four-legged avenger," said Nick.

Don was kept in that room till about half-past eleven o'clock.

Meanwhile Nick started for the new Union Passenger Station.

Chick, with Don in charge, left the Park

avenue house soon after, and reached the scene of the advertised place of meeting.

Nick was already there.

In his hand he held Inez Benito's envelope with the torn fragment of the photograph pasted on the surface held outwardly.

Nick was walking up and down in front of the depot as if waiting for some one.

When Chick and Don got within fifty feet of Nick the dog's excitement began to grow.

Crowds of people were passing into and out of the depot at the time, and among them the dog pitched and lunged with every particle of his power of scent in play. Not a man in the throng escaped Don's inspection as he passed them.

Finally he stopped stockstill. His big eyes were looking up into the face of a stalwart negro, whose steps the dog had interrupted.

The negro had been looking sideways in the direction of Nick and did not see the dog until the brute's growl diverted his attention.

The growl was followed by Don's lips uncovering the teeth.

Before the negro could take a step in any direction, and before Chick could tighten his hold on Don's chain, the big brute, with one howl and leap, had the negro by the throat.

Man and dog went down together.

Nick rushed up to aid Chick and some of the bystanders in pulling the noble brute from his victim.

This they managed to do, but not till the latter was terribly lacerated.

A policeman pushed his way through and the crowd called upon him to kill the dog.

Nick held up his hand and cried:

"No, not for the city of St. Louis! This man killed the dog's mistress last night, and had it not been for the brute's instincts,

the murderer might never have been detected. See, the man is disguised."

As he spoke, Nick stooped and passed a wet handkerchief over the wounded man's face. The result was a startling surprise to the crowd.

The black skin became almost white where the handkerchief had passed over.

"Who are you?" asked the policeman.

"Nick Carter, the New York detective," came the reply.

The disguised and badly wounded Yagamez was insensible and bleeding dangerously from the ragged wounds in his neck left by the dog's teeth.

An ambulance was called at Nick's orders, and the great criminal was taken to a hospital.

He never left the bed on which they laid him, but died two days later from the effect of the wounds he received from the avenging dog.

Before he died he was wholly conscious and realized the inevitable fate before him.

Under those circumstances Yagamez made full confession to Nick of all which the latter wanted to know.

He and Inez Benito met on a train going from New Orleans to St. Louis in the preceding May.

He had exercised over her much of his well-known hypnotic power.

She surrendered to him absolutely, even to relating to him many of her family affairs—including the bonds in trust of the Highlands for her aunt and cousin.

Gradually he had so influenced her as to win her over to a plot to steal the bonds, promising, after they came into his possession, to marry her and take her with him to Australia, where they could together enjoy the fruits of their larceny.

For that purpose he had gone to Havana, and the daring plot was worked upon.

The first step in the plot was carried out by Inez when she stole her uncle's memorandum numbers of the bonds, the only record thereof in existence.

The presence in Havana of Anson Bryce a day previous to his arrival aided them. Inez had met Bryce in St. Louis and knew him. She met him again in the streets of Havana and learned all of his plans.

When he departed for New York Yagamez personated him, and together they visited Highland's office, where, by means already explained, Yagamez made a mental photograph of the bundles of securities in the strong box.

These, by his masterly skill of counterfeiting, he duplicated to outward appearance.

On their second visit to Highland's office the exchange was made. During the five or ten seconds in which Highland's back was turned Yagamez snatched the bonds from the box and Inez deposited the dummies.

The latter had been soaked in an acid which, in less than twenty-four hours thereafter turned the paper into dust.

Everything had been prepared beforehand. The bonds were carried to Yagamez's rooms and thrust into a waiting package, which was sealed and addressed to the manager of the Lindell Hotel. The half of the five-dollar bill was pasted across the seal.

With the package went instructions purporting to be from Anson Bryce to the effect that the package was not to be delivered to any one without the presentation of the other half of the five dollar banknote.

Inez had then appeared in a male disguise, which she had worn under her skirts, and took the package to the express office.

For fear of being followed by Nick Carter and probably arrested, Yagamez left the valuable fragment of this banknote with Inez and hastened to St. Louis.

Then came his letter to her to send it on

and his command that she wait for him in New Orleans.

He confirmed Nick's theory that Inez, free from Yagamez's personal influence, began to suspect treachery and adopted the plan of "planting" the check claim in St. Louis, where it would be within her reach, yet not where Yagamez could possibly get his hands on it.

It was her intention to force him to marry her first before she surrendered the check for the bonds.

The supposed loss of Everett Carter with the check of course changed her plans.

She did not tell him of its loss, but let him believe she had it hidden away, and thereby tried to force him to marry her before she gave it up.

It was a fatal mistake—a deception which cost her her life, as we know.

Before he died, Yagamez placed in Nick's hands the confession and will of Durrell Weston, which cleared an innocent man of suspected crime and placed a much wronged young lady in possession of a large inheritance.

Royal Highlands, after his arrival in St. Louis, had gone straight to the office of Anson Bryce.

There his worst suspicions were confirmed.

He assured himself that the party in Havana, whom Inez Benito had brought to his father's office, was a fraud and not the St. Louis attorney.

Heartbroken at his discovery, which finally convinced him that the girl he loved was unworthy, he went back to New York a desperate man.

Before he had worked himself up to do anything rash, however, Nick Carter appeared with the missing securities.

In the satisfaction of the vindication of his family name and the restoration of his

father to good standing in Havana, Royal in part shook off his disappointment of the heart and is now trying to forget the memory of the unworthy Inez Benito.

Don is a new addition to Nick Carter's household gods.

Now and then the great detective pats the noble dog on the head and says:

"Old boy, I owe you two debts which I can never repay. You not only saved my life,

but you did what I might have failed to do for some time without your assistance—caught one of the shrewdest criminals with whom I ever came in contact—Fernando Yagamez."

THE END.

The next number will contain "The Passenger in the Lower Berth; or, A Startling Disappearance from a Railroad Sleeping-Car."

Nick Carter Weekly

THE BEST LIBRARY OF DETECTIVE STORIES.

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202—The Counterfeiter's Gold Tooth; or, Nick Carter's Crooked Correspondent.
201—The Great Life Insurance Fraud; or, Nick Carter's Tussle with a Very Slick Countryman.
200—The Beautiful Shop-Lifter; or, Nick Carter's Search for an Old Offender.
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